

APART^{OF} ME

Press Release

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Rise in young people grieving online leads to 'Apart of Me', the world's first therapeutic game for helping young people find hope in the face of death

An award-winning mobile game is being released during Children's Grief Awareness Week (15–21 November 2018) to help support bereaved young people and their families. It's been designed by a leading child psychotherapist Louis Weinstock and his London-based social enterprise Bounce Works.

Louis said: "In the UK alone it's estimated one child in every classroom has lost a parent or sibling, and we know that more and more young people are using social media to grieve, but Facebook and Instagram are sometimes not the safest places for a child to process sensitive emotions. The lack of appropriate online and offline spaces to grieve can have serious repercussions for young people. A quarter of under 20 year olds who take their own lives have experienced childhood bereavement, whilst 41% of youth offenders have also experienced loss."

In an era of increasing technology addiction, Apart of Me is the first ever interactive digital tool that uses gaming technology to translate the best therapeutic techniques and practices for dealing with grief into a safe virtual space. Based on evidence and feedback from young people it has been designed to help families develop emotional literacy and wisdom around death.

In the virtual world, the primary aim is to train young players up to become 'Guides', where they can then provide support through the game to other young people in distress. On the virtual island, there is: a magical cave where young people can listen to 'stories of love and loss' from other bereaved young people from around the world, reducing the sense of isolation experienced following a bereavement; fireflies to be caught which teach about the different emotions associated with grief as well as evidence-based strategies to deal with them; a rockpool where young people can find some peace, listening to tailored mindfulness exercises; 'quests' that equip young people to have difficult conversations with loved ones; and bottles that wash up on the island containing 'grief wisdom' from real-world experts.

"Our children are digital natives growing up in a digital world," Weinstock continued. "We need to realise that technology can be a positive force in young people's lives, if it's designed with their needs in mind, rather than advertising

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revenues. I realized we needed to meet young people where they are at. With Apart of Me, we want to capture young people's attention for just long enough to be able to make a positive impact on their wellbeing and hopefully get them hooked on something that will actually help them build emotional resilience."

"Nothing like Apart of Me exists currently anywhere in the world," Weinstock added. "There are no other interactive digital tools using gaming technology that translate the best therapeutic techniques and practices for dealing with grief into a safe virtual space."

Ben Page, the technical co-founder of Bounce Works, has overseen the development of the app. He described how the technical design has been created specifically to support young people to build real life connections. "So many apps are deliberately designed to dominate our attention in an effort to boost advertising revenue and company valuations." Page said, "This is the particularly true for apps targeting young people. In contrast our design philosophy is to connect virtual worlds to real life 'moments that count'. Our app actually encourages young people to connect to friends and family outside of the game through a series of 'real life' quests. It's very rewarding to work on something which helps young people when they need it".

The game has already received glowing endorsements, being featured in The Guardian's top 10 tech projects to look forward to in 2018, nominated as a finalist in the Pfizer Healthcare Hub awards, and a runner up in the Tech4Good awards 2018, and has the full support of celebrities Jon Snow and Stephen Fry as well as grief experts like Julia Samuel MBE, Founder Patron of Child Bereavement UK and author of Grief Works.

ENDS

Interviews with bereaved young people and child psychologist available

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Bounce Works: <https://bounce.works>

Apart of Me: <https://apartofme.app>

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The app is freely available on iOS and Android.

Bouncework's Advisors

Over the past few years Ben and Louis have been working closely with a team of advisors, young people and parents who have lost a loved one.

Mandy, widow and mother of 2, said: "If we'd had this game available to us when my wife was still alive she would have enjoyed helping him create a memory box and having set tasks to do would've made this incredibly daunting task more manageable for her."

Olly Clabburn, who lost his father to MND, and is now doing a PHD investigating the use of digital legacies for people living with motor neurone disease said: "What's amazing and unique about Apart of Me is children can create a legacy alongside their ill family member."

One of the venture's main advisors, Jamie, lost his dad to a liver cancer 3 years ago. Without the resources or conversations he needed, Jamie found himself going rapidly downhill, hanging out with the wrong crowd and getting excluded from school. Since being involved with Louis and the Bounce Works project, Jamie has been studying a graphic design course at college, and is getting back on his feet.

He says of Apart of Me: "If I'd have had something that would have reminded me how precious the time was, before it was too late, that would have been amazing. Since being involved in this project, I have been able to find some meaning from all of those dark times".

Three of the UK's leading bereavement charities have partnered with Bounce Works to aid with the development and distribution of Apart of Me:

"Teenagers and Young Adults in particular are a group that we have collectively identified as needing more innovative and digitally-led therapeutic and talking tools to help them process their grief. Our combined involvement in the 'Apart of Me' App represents our commitment to the development and progression of bereavement services in the UK, to make sure every bereaved child is supported through their grief."

– Richard Fogleman, CEO, Grief Encounter

"Winston's Wish is delighted to be working with Bounce Works to develop Apart of

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Me. It is so important that we continue to develop and offer young people support in a way that they are comfortable with and that appeals to them. Engaging young people in traditional ways can be challenging, yet we know that with the right support following a bereavement, this age group is able to adapt to their new reality with confidence and go on to live full and flourishing lives. We feel that Apart of Me will offer a valuable tool to work with this age group in the future.”

– Sacha Richardson, Director of Clinical Services, Winston’s Wish

“The young people supported by Child Bereavement UK tell us how important it is to be able to access support via a range of media and frequently emphasise how important the digital world is to them. We are delighted to be working with Bounce Works to create Apart of Me.”

– Ann Rowland, Director Bereavement Support & Education, Child Bereavement UK

“This game is bloomin’ fantastic!” – April Shipton, Fundraising Officer, Hope Support Services

“When I lost my dad, the loneliness that ensued killed part of me too. It was believing no-one else felt the way I did. It was being scared to talk. It saw me knock on every wrong door going – drugs, depression, suicidal thoughts. This game can stop other young people suffering from the same isolation, loneliness, and all the troubles that follow; this game has the ability to change lives and save others.”

William Hunter Howell, Bestselling Author, ‘Affable in Adversity

We are sure this game will be a huge success and a vital tool for a 21st Century approach to bereavement.” Linda Magistris, Chief Executive/Founder, The Good Grief Trust